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ABSTRACT

This supplement, a collaboration of "American School & University" and "Access Control & Security Systems Integration" magazines, presents four articles examining equipment and management strategies to ensure school safety. "School Security by the Numbers" (Joe Agron; Larry Anderson) defines the parameters and quantifies the trend in the school security arena. "A Tale of Three Districts" (Kate Henry) discusses how community unity can stabilize public schools by examining three very different school districts and how they handle security issues. "Protection for Portables" (Mike Kennedy) explores school safety and the security of portable classrooms. "Securing a Balance" (Kennedy, Mike) discusses developing a security plan that minimizes the potential for legal troubles by protecting both students and staff while respecting their rights. (GR)

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School Security 2000

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A Special Supplement to

ACCESS CONTROL & SECURITY SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

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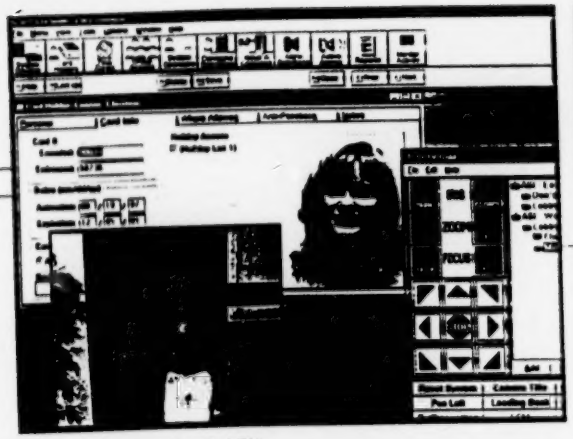

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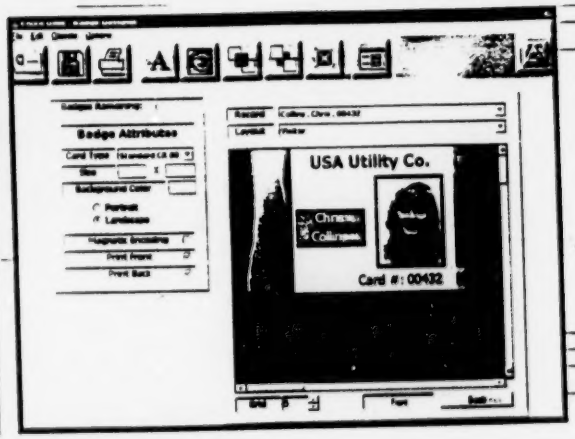

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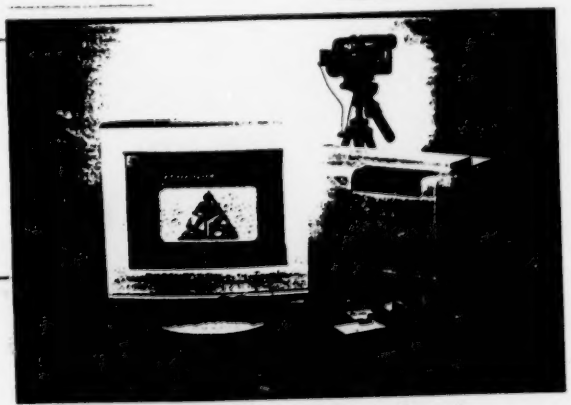

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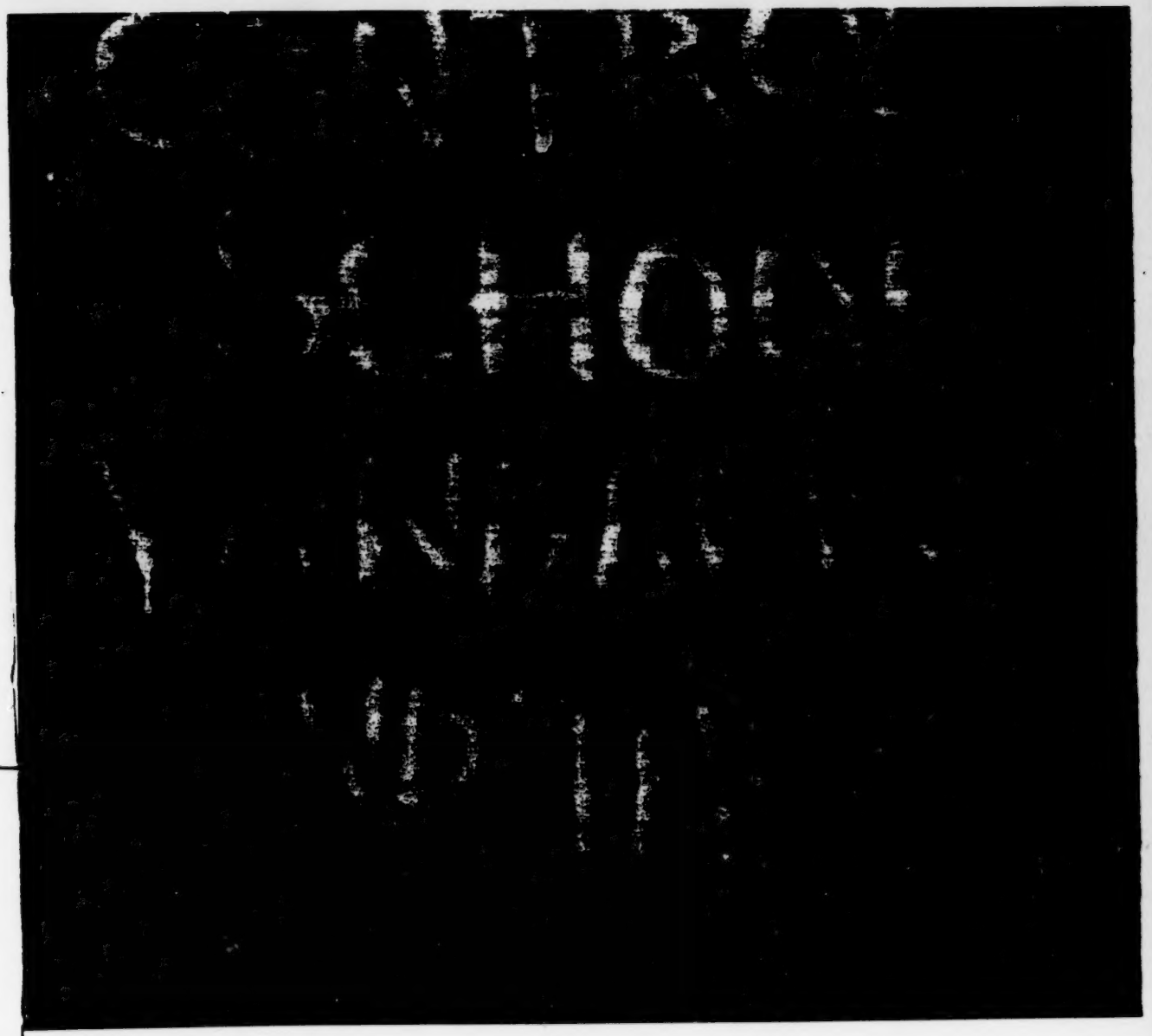

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School Security 2000

A Message From The Editors

It has been more than a year since the tragedy at Columbine High School shook the nation's consciousness and put school security at the top of the national agenda. In the intervening year, the nation has worked its way through the stages of grief, from denial to anger to a torpid acceptance. Meanwhile, education and security professionals have been closing in on ways to better address the problem, journeying in the process from "how could this happen?" to "what can we do?" to "let's get started."

AMERICAN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY magazine has monitored the effects of the Columbine tragedy on security awareness in the education environment, while ACCESS CONTROL & SECURITY SYSTEMS INTEGRATION magazine has witnessed the impact of the tragedy from the viewpoint of security professionals. The Columbine shooting rampage has both raised the profile of security concerns in the education field and raised the importance of the education market in the security arena.

It falls well within the missions of both magazines to facilitate an exchange of ideas on equipment and management strategies to ensure school safety. The enthusiastic response in the marketplace to our first joint collaboration, "Under Siege: Schools As The New Battleground," more than confirms our conviction that bringing together the communities of the two magazines provides the best opportunity to shed light on these important issues.

We decided to collaborate on this second school security supplement because we saw an opportunity to fill in some blanks. Columbine prompted security and education professionals to rethink long-held approaches, to see security issues from a new perspective. It also infused the decision-making process with an urgency born from the realization that what happened in Colorado could happen at any school in the country. As professionals scrambled to respond, we saw a need for solid, quantitative information on school security trends and the available strategic and equipment options.

To create a source of such information, we asked Intertec Publishing's Research Department to conduct our first-ever School Security 2000 survey. In designing the survey, we called on expert sources and the editorial resources of both magazines to determine what information would be most helpful to professionals tasked with deciding what security equipment and strategies to use. With the survey in hand, researchers telephoned hundreds of school professionals to get answers to our questions, which we compiled into a report on the survey. (Our thanks to those who participated.)

We hope that the results of the survey will contribute constructively to the discussion of school security and help guide professionals as they proceed.

We welcome feedback from our readers on our school security supplement, and we especially welcome ideas about what you would like to see in future issues.

Joe Agron

Joe Agron, Editor in Chief
AMERICAN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY

Larry Anderson

Editor/Associate Publisher
ACCESS CONTROL & SECURITY SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

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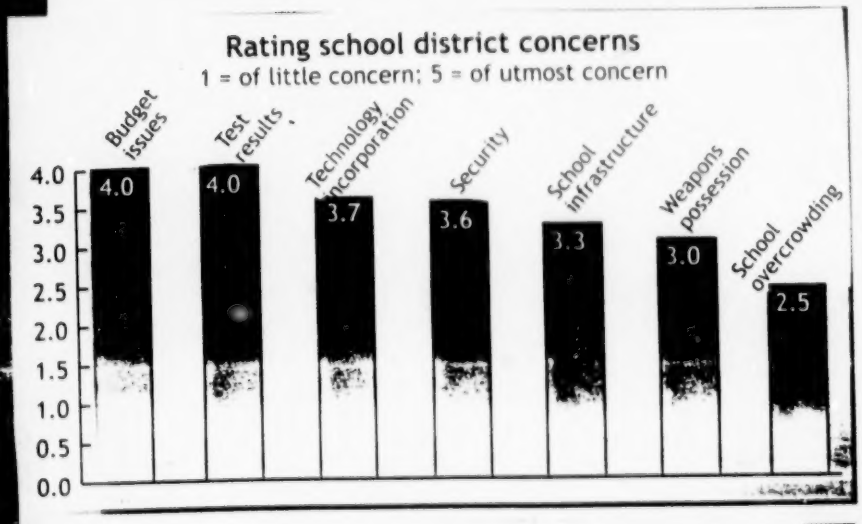
School security by the numbers

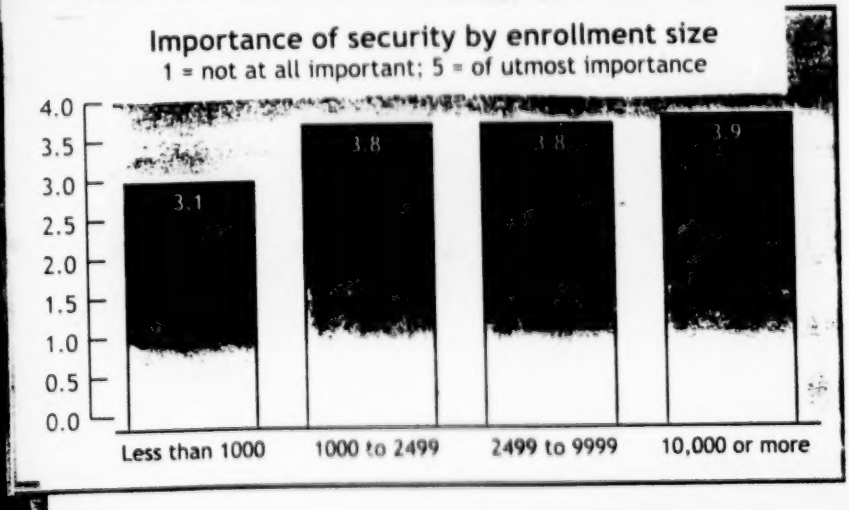
By Joe Agron and Larry Anderson

Media attention to random schoolyard violence has toned down considerably lately, suggesting that we as a society are becoming either numb to the problem or tired of hearing about it. But no one suggests that the problem is going away.

Moreover, media coverage discloses only a fraction of the scope of security issues in the educational environment. School security is a broader and much more complex topic than the latest violent schoolyard horror story. Schools everywhere are facing a variety of perplexing and often expensive security challenges.

A cooperative research effort undertaken by AMERICAN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY and ACCESS CONTROL & SECURITY SYSTEMS INTEGRATION magazines seeks to define the parameters and quantify the trends in the school security arena. This special supplement is the result of that collaboration. Our goal is to shed new light on how the nation's schools are meeting the unprecedented challenges they face on the security front. In the process, we want to recognize the successes and identify the opportunities as education and security professionals toil to keep a generation of children safe.





Many school professionals see a need for more quantitative information on the subject of school security. "In the age of accountability, having data on which to base decisions is very helpful. It gives substantiation to decisions we are making," says Marilyn Layman, superintendent of the DeSoto Unified School District, KS. "However, one also has to counterbalance the data with what is good and right for your community; your school district; your particular issues, needs, etc."

Here are some of the trends revealed by our exclusive research:

• Concern for security is among the top concerns of school administrators, rating higher in their consciousness than high-profile problems such as school infrastructure and overcrowding.

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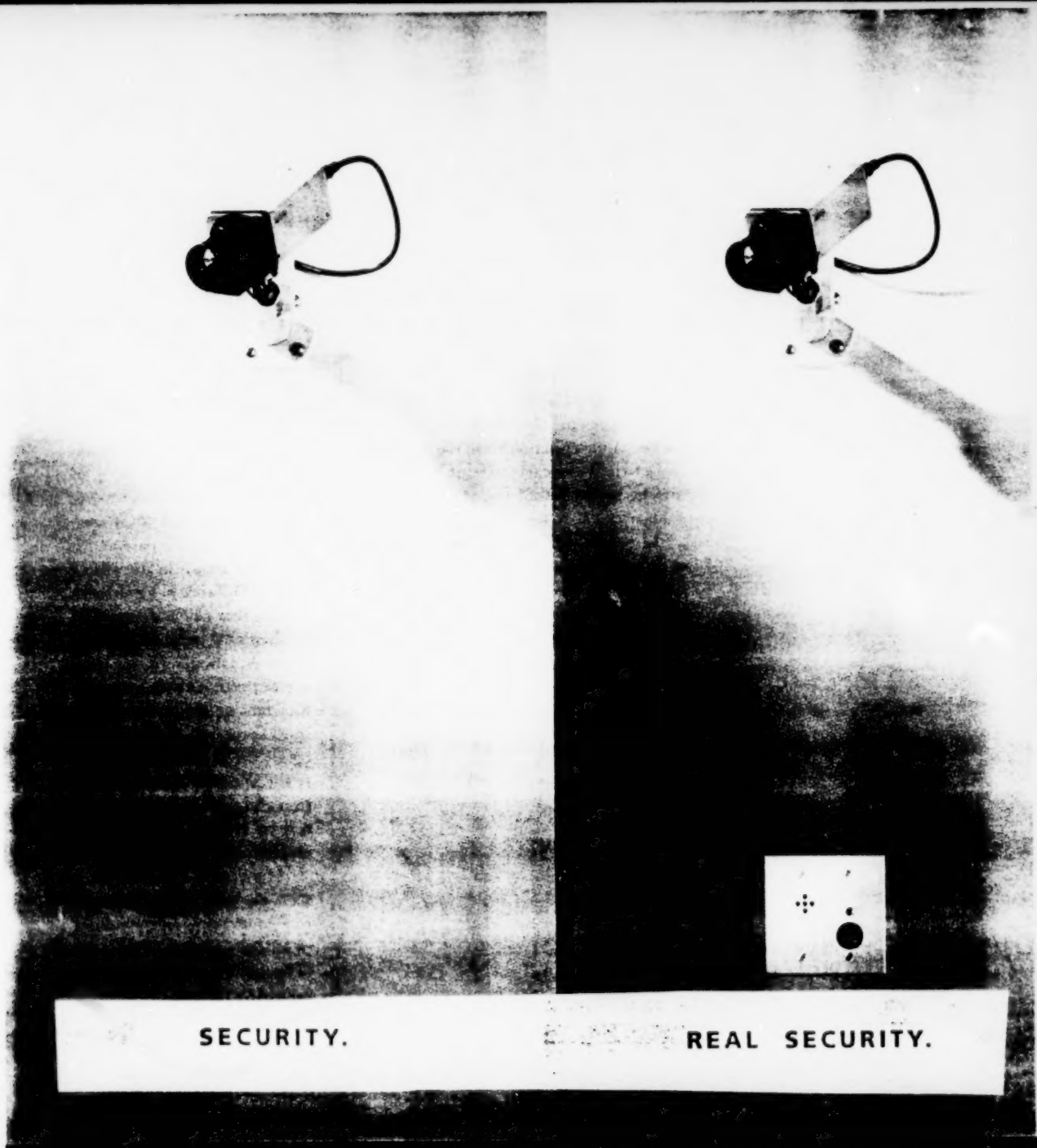

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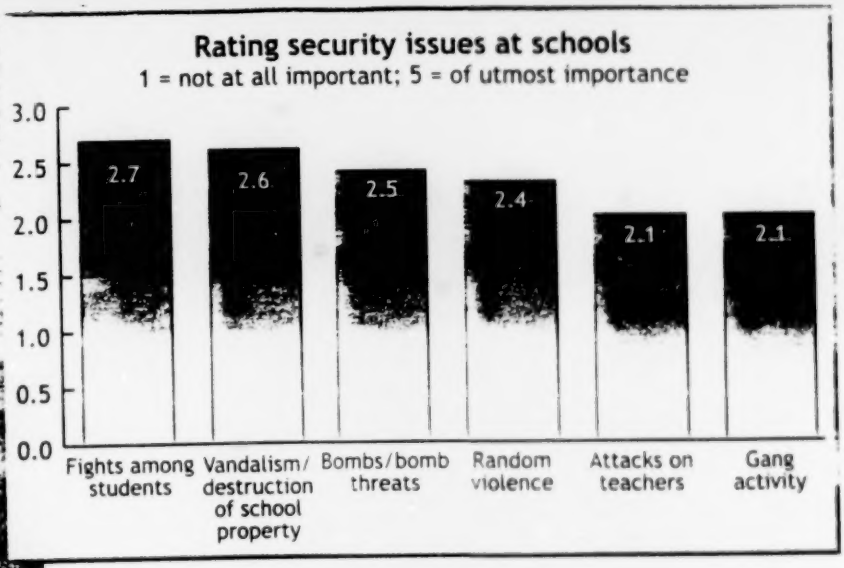


• Although random violence steals the national media spotlight, administrators are more concerned about day-to-day problems such as fights among students and vandalism.

• Publicity about random violence at schools is raising overall awareness of school security issues and is compelling administrators to review their security plans.

• Public schools will spend $795 million on security this year, or some $19.28 per student.

The scope of the problem

Awareness of school security is rising nationally in the wake of news reports of random violence. It's a consciousness shared by administrators of the nation's schools. Among school officials surveyed, 70 percent rate security issues as of utmost importance in creating an environment conducive to learning. On a scale of 1 to 5, the importance of security in this regard rates an average of 4.5.

In fact, security rates overall among the top-four concerns of survey respondents, right behind the ongoing issues of budgets, test results and incorporation of technology. Security rates as a greater concern than school infrastructure and school overcrowding. (See chart on page C6). Among larger school districts, measured both by number of buildings and enrollment, security concerns tend to rate higher, although still falling behind other common issues.

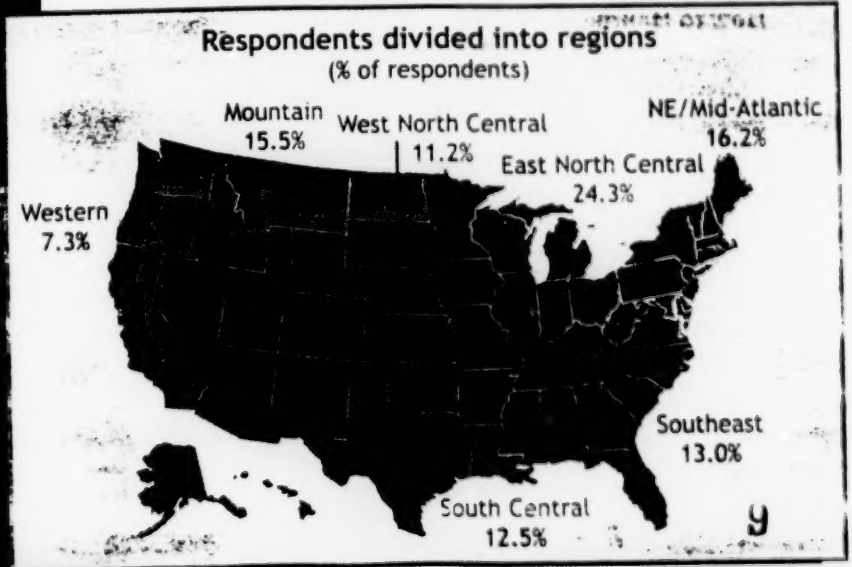
"How you rank [the importance of security] varies depending on how you measure it," contends Kelvin Lee, superintendent of the Dry Creek Joint Elementary School District, CA. "For example, do you base its importance on where it is listed in the overall school budget? It is not very high in our budget; there is not much money specified for it in comparison to other items.

"On the other hand, if you have security measures in place, it leaves a perception among constituents that you are doing very well in this area — and there are ways to let people know [security measures] are in place. For example, we have implemented signage, ID badges, and we regularly inform the community about our crisis preparedness. It sets a culture and adds to a sense of security. It lets everyone know we are prepared."

On the other end of the spectrum, schools with enrollment under 1,000 students are significantly less concerned about security than schools with larger enrollment. The second chart on page C6 shows importance ratings for security among districts with various enrollment sizes.

The top-ranked security concern among respondents is fights among students, followed by vandalism, and bomb threats. Despite its prominence in the public eye, random violence rates fourth, followed by attacks on teachers and gang activity. (See chart above).

Even given the high media profile, survey respondents see little evidence of media-prompted hysteria among parents and the public: 82 percent respond that parents and the public are "sufficiently concerned" about security. Only 5 percent suggest they are "too concerned," while another 11 percent respond that they are "not concerned enough." More districts with only one or two buildings and districts in the



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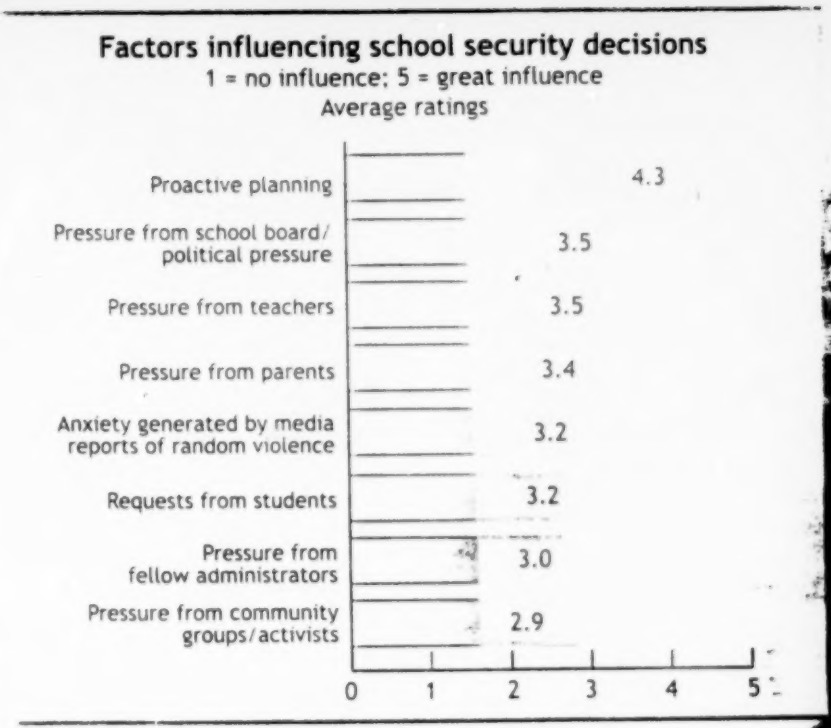
Mountain region tend to respond that parents and the public are "not concerned enough." (See map on page C8 for division of states into regions. The largest number of respondents is in the East North Central and the lowest number is in the Western region.)

"Many communities put their hands in front of their eyes and say 'it can't happen here.' But [security threats] can happen anywhere, anyplace, and at any time," says Bob Van Zanten, superintendent of the Yorktown Central School District, NY. "If anything, I don't think some communities prepare enough [against potential security threats]. We need to bring those that don't along and ensure that an appropriate plan is in place and that certain steps are implemented."



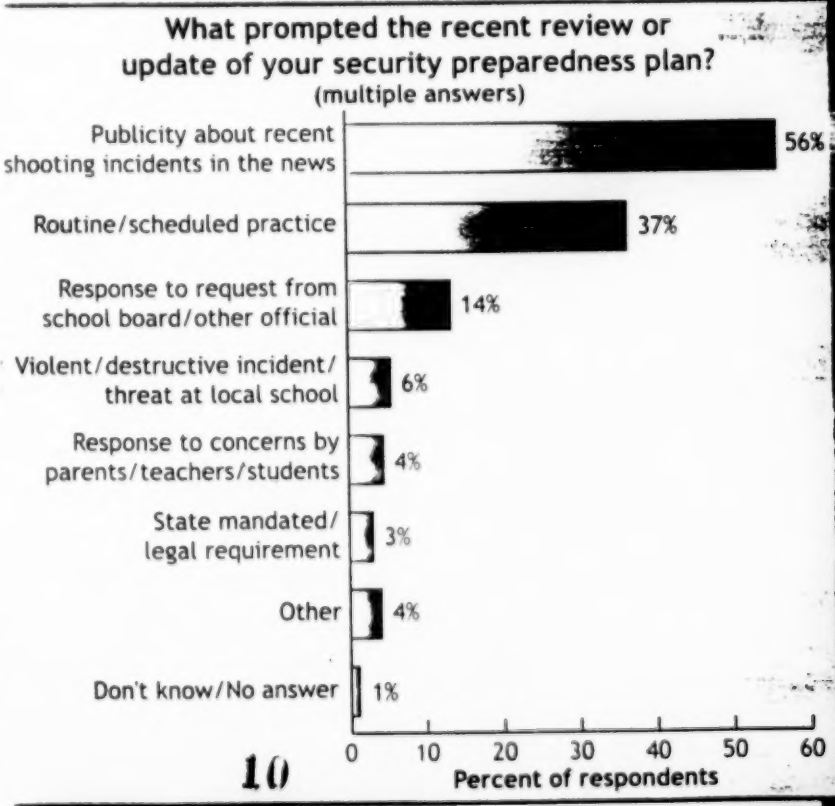
Numerous factors influenced security activities at school districts surveyed, with "proactive planning" heading the list. Rated next are various pressures from the school board, teacher or parents. The chart above shows the factors influencing school security decisions. Pressure from community groups or activists is rated higher among school districts with larger enrollments. Smaller districts (enrollment under 1,000 students) tend to rate anxiety generated by media reports of random violence and proactive planning as less important than do larger districts.

Some 94.5 percent of respondents have reviewed or updated their security preparedness in the past year. The most common factor triggering the update is publicity about recent violent school incidents in the news. (The chart to the right shows other reasons.)

Equipment solutions

Locks are the predominate security technology at elementary, middle and high schools. At the elementary level, call boxes are the next most common equipment, while at the middle school level, ID card systems are the second most common. At the high school level, CCTV is the second most common technology.

The tendency to install CCTV, handheld metal detectors and ID card systems in the elementary schools increases among districts with greater numbers of buildings. The larger the school district, the more types of security equipment likely to be installed or planned for installation. Similar trends are observable at the middle and high



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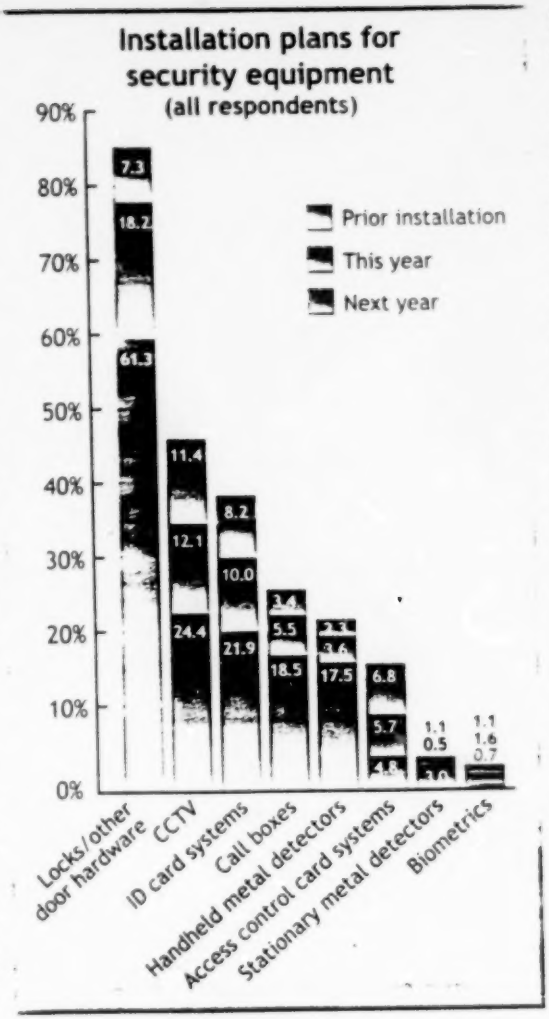
school levels. As one might expect, high schools have more security equipment installed than elementary and middle schools. Also, handheld metal detectors represent a greater percentage of the equipment; among high schools, 27 percent either use or plan to use handheld metal detectors.

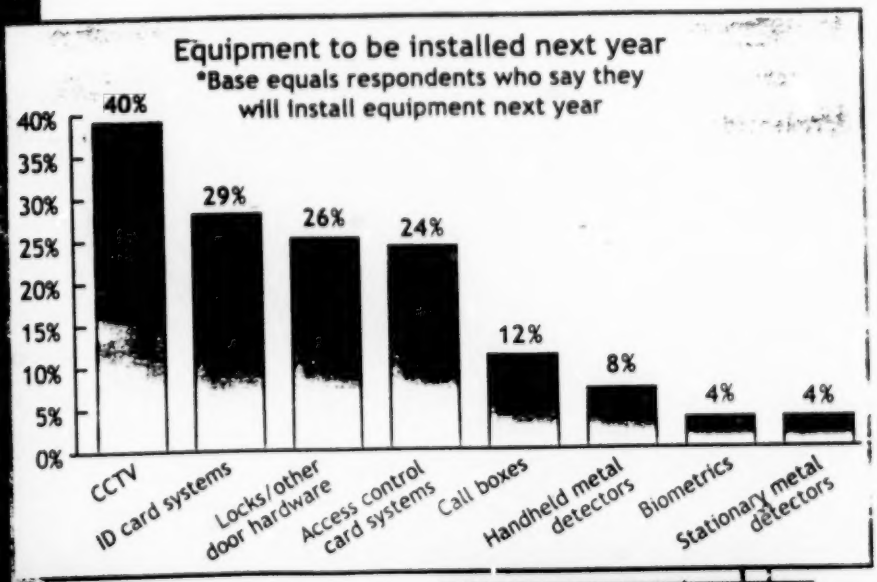
The chart at right shows installation plans for various types of security equipment this year and next year, along with estimates of prior installation. Some 37 percent of respondents will install at least one type of security equipment this year. Regionally, districts in the Southeast are most likely to install handheld metal detectors, while South Central and Western region districts are most likely to install CCTV this year.



Next year, 28.5 percent of respondents will install at least one type of security equipment, with CCTV and ID card systems heading the list (see chart below). Districts with larger enrollments are more likely to use access control card systems, while districts with fewer than 2,500 students are more likely to install CCTV. The top chart on page C11 shows equipment installation trends for elementary, middle and high schools.

Non-equipment solutions

Beyond equipment, school districts across the country are taking a variety of other approaches to promoting school security. The bottom chart on page C11 summarizes security measures that have been implemented and are planned, with an intervention program for troubled children topping the list. Other common practices are a zero tolerance policy, searches of students/lockers, administrators and staff walking the halls more often and stricter rules regarding building access. Districts with more buildings and larger enrollments are more likely to have already implemented one of the measures in a previous school year. Of the programs to be implemented this year and next year, stricter rules regarding building access and student hotline/encouragement of anonymous tips head the list. School resource officers are more common among districts that have more buildings. The larger the enrollment, the more likely a district is to be planning implementation of student hotlines and encouragement of anonymous tips. Regionally, Southeast and South Central region districts are more likely to plan to ban book bags or require transparent book bags. Larger-enrollment districts are more likely to plan to ban book bags or require transparent book bags, require school uniforms or stricter dress codes, or deploy armed sworn police officers. A zero tolerance policy is the most popular security program for elementary schools in the Mountain and Western regions. At the high school level, use of armed and unarmed school resource officers and armed and unarmed sworn police



officers increases with the number of buildings.

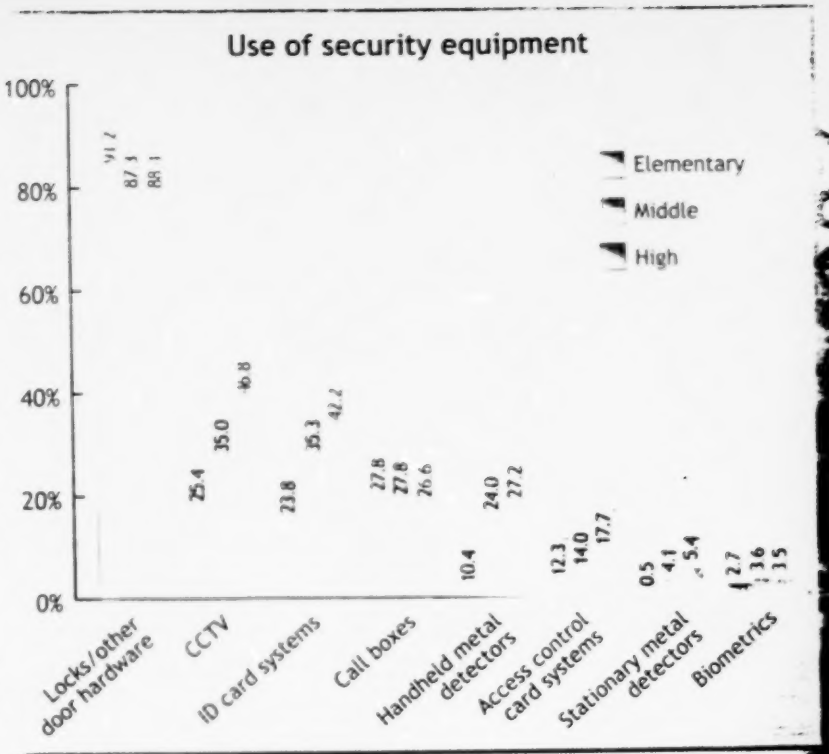
The cost of security

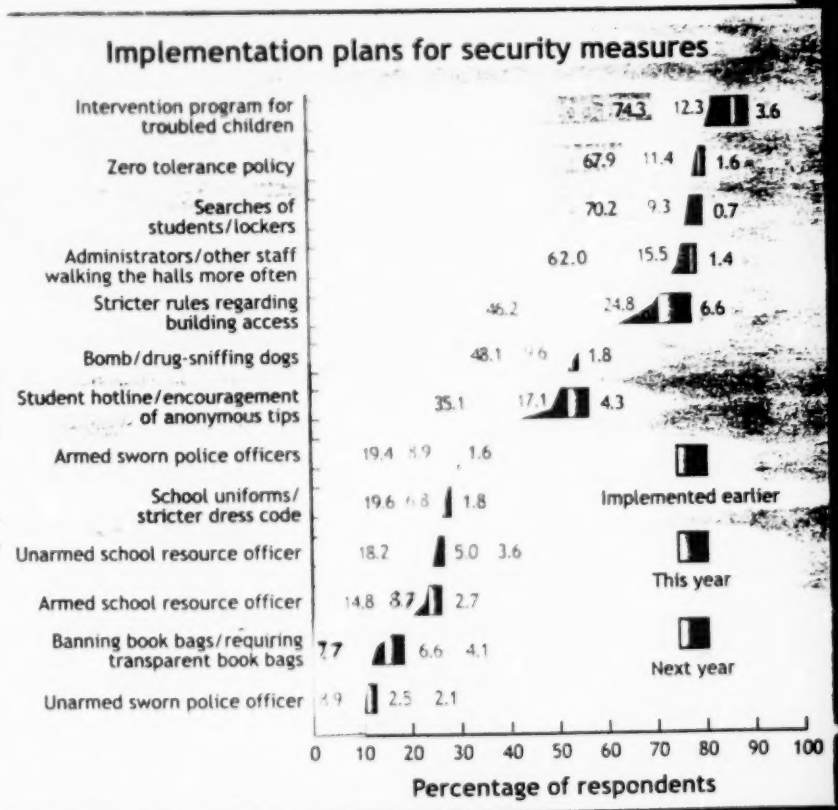
Securing America's schools will be achieved at a high cost. According to our survey, public schools say they will spend $795 million on security this school year, or some $19.28 per student. The chart on page C12 shows how much money districts are planning to spend on security this school year; the mean is $53,603. Of course, districts with enrollment of 10,000 or more and with more than 10 buildings will spend significantly more money on security than other districts.

More than a third of districts (35 percent) expect their security spending to change during the next school year, including 21 percent that expect an increase, and 13 percent expecting a decrease. Expenditures are most likely to increase in the Sunbelt, possibly attributable in part to construction necessitated by population growth. Larger districts with enrollment of more than 10,000 students or with more than 10 buildings are also most likely to increase their expenditures.

About the survey

The survey is based on 439 telephone interviews conducted with school administrators across the country by RDI Marketing Services. Of the respondents, 24 percent of respondents say their districts have more than 10 buildings; 19 percent have six to 10 buildings; 32 percent have three to five buildings; and 23 percent have one or two buildings. The overall average student enrollment of respondents' districts is 5,029 students. Thirty-two percent have less than 1000 students; 29 percent have 1000 to 2499 students; 22 percent have 2500 to 9999 students; and 14 percent have 10,000 students or more.





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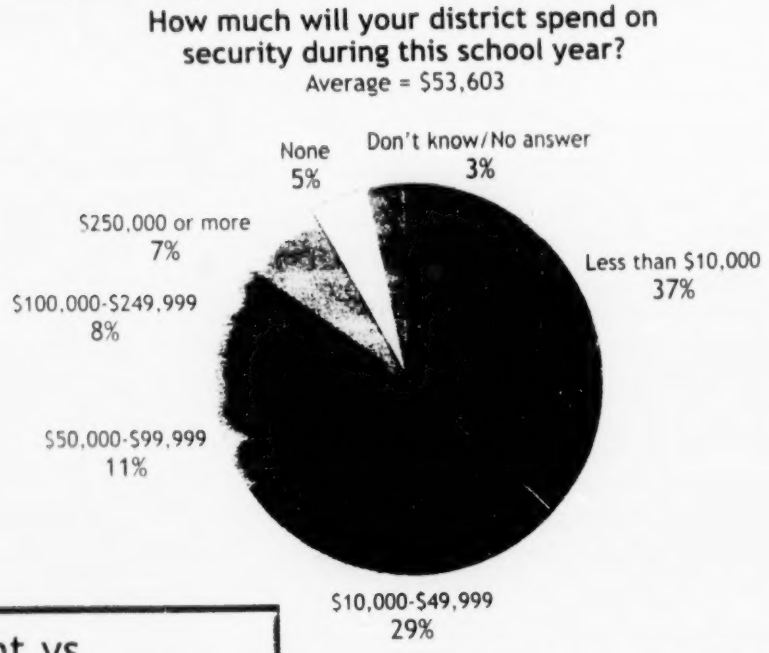

Equipment vs. programmatic solutions

Balancing the implementation of equipment and programmatic solutions in school security is challenging. Often, outside pressures force the purchase of security equipment that may not be the best use of available funds. But savvy administrators have a plan.

"I weight programmatic implementation far higher than equipment implementation," says Arlis Swartzendruber, superintendent of the Waterloo Community School District, IA.

"Equipment is a relatively small percentage of our efforts. There are some pressures to install certain types of equipment, but you have to put it in perspective. The emphasis should be more on such things as prevention and teaching responsibility."

The installation of security equipment is not a priority for Wayland Public School District, MA. "We've been fortunate not to have to invest in a lot of security equipment," says Gary Burton, superintendent. "We are primarily talking about education programs for students and staff to keep them safe, and trying to make buildings safe yet user friendly. Currently, we are not feeling any pressure to make changes in security. But I'm sure that after the next major incident, there will be more interest. On one level I think we are prepared, but on another level I don't know if we'll ever be prepared. After all, who could ever imagine that you'd have a six-year-old bringing a gun to school?"

When is it dangerous?

Our survey asked school officials at what time of day, day of the week and time of the year were security threats likely to occur. Morning is the most likely time of day, Friday and Monday are the most likely days of the week, and springtime and before or after a holiday/break were the most likely times of the year for security threats to occur.

"We have found that the trend often varies by the nature of the threat," says Ron Jandura, superintendent of the Burlington Area School District, WI.

"Bomb threats are more prominent in the springtime, especially in colder climates," says Jandura. "The first couple of days of spring students often are looking for an excuse to be out of school. Vandalism happens more after school hours, especially during evenings and weekends. The more serious threats typically have a random distribution as opposed to any particular pattern. If tensions are high, it's safe to anticipate [that there may be a potential threat]."

To purchase a complete copy of the survey, contact Candis Logue at 913-967-7214; e-mail candis_logue@intertec.com.

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A tale of three districts

How community unity stabilizes America's public schools

By Kate Henry

If you ever behold a rotting-but-stalwart, little red schoolhouse in Anytown, U.S.A., built in a bygone century, it's not hard to imagine the ghosts of the young lives it shaped. Surely, the townspeople would have held the schoolmasters responsible for teaching their children the skills that would carry them safely into sound adulthood. Had a crisis reared its ugly head — an errant child threatening the personal safety of his peers with a purloined hunting knife — surely, the community would have rallied to keep its children safe.

The next time you behold a sprawling, concrete or brick structure surrounded by a chain-link fence, realize with a start that it is a school, and lament the state of education in this country, take heart: appearances can be deceiving. In rural, suburban and urban school districts alike, community activism is still driving the quest for safe, nurturing schools for America's children.

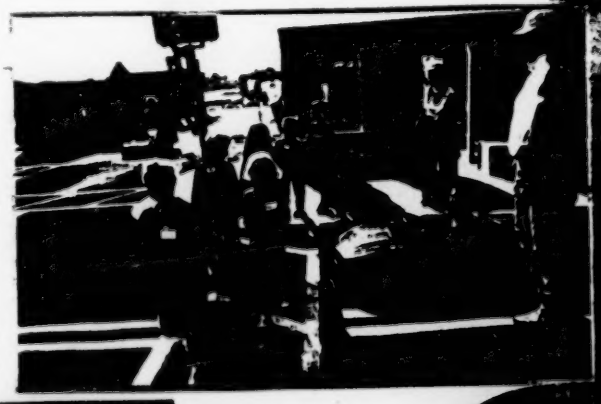
Photos courtesy of Journal Communications

Students in Warren County, Ky., earn "driver's licenses" in the Safety City program. Mini-Corvettes go two to three miles per hour in Safety City. (photo below)

Small town, not small time

Activism flourishes in Warren County Public Schools, Bowling Green, Ky., a rural school district serving 11,000 students in grades pre-K through 12. The school system comprises eleven elementary schools, three middle schools, three high schools, and two alternative schools. According to superintendent Leonard McCoy, it faces the same potential risks as any other school system, but has staved them off with a proactive approach to safety and security.

"Years ago, we formed a committee of non-school-affiliated people that included law enforcement and other professionals, and told them to take a close look at us and assess the shortcomings we might not be able to see because we were too close to the issues," he explains. McCoy says 28 of the committee's 32 recommended measures were in place before the final committee report was even issued. "Our safety program is broad-based and comprehensive, centering around two primary areas: prevention and consequences for misbehavior," he says. "We know that our children want safe schools, and that the vast majority of them do not



want drugs or weapons there, so we enlist their help, and that of the community."

Leonard McCoy

McCoy points out that Warren County is not beset by problems with gangs or guns, thanks largely to its programs and measures. "It has been six years since a gun has entered one of our schools," he says. "Our schools are safe and very well monitored, and we have high expectations of proper behavior from the students. But we realize there are students and adults whose actions need to be closely monitored and whose attitudes need further attention."

The district's two alternative schools educate students who have been deemed unable to function effectively in a regular school setting. "If a student's behavior is continually incorrigible," explains McCoy, "he or she will appear before the Board of Education. The alternative schools serve grades 5-8 and 8-12. Eighth graders are placed according to maturity level."

Providing safety and security information to 8- and 9-year-olds in Warren County, Ky.

Photo courtesy of Journal Communications

A broad spectrum of safety and counseling programs are aimed at keeping schoolchildren out of trouble in Warren County, and the students themselves are integral to most efforts. As McCoy puts it, "School districts may be required to have certain programs, but if you do not affect the attitudes and expectations of the students, staff and community, nothing will work well."

Some of Warren County's programs include:

• Safety City, a program in which 8- and 9-year-old students spend a day learning all manner of safety and security information, from "Stranger, Danger" to dialing 911. McCoy gives credit for the $700,000 program to the community, which worked with the schools in planning, and provided most of the funding. "The facility is at one of the high schools, and the program is led by a town police officer. The day culminates with an activity for which we have constructed a mini-city, and we have 15 mini-Corvettes that go 2-3 miles per hour that the children get to drive. They earn honorary drivers' licenses after successful completion of the program."

• A gun safety program taught at the elementary level, which teaches children to 'stop, get away, and tell an adult.'

• The Second Step violence prevention curriculum, which, according to McCoy, provides a systemic approach to assisting children in developing effective empathy, anger management and impulse control skills. "We teach it just as we do other main curricular areas," he says.

• Peer mediation programs in all the elementary, middle and high schools.

• A Natural Helpers program at the high schools that involves students trained to assist their peers with problematic social issues. "Some children are natural helpers of others. We use and accentuate their talents by putting the kids who need help with kids who can be part of the solutions," says McCoy.

• A Junior CrimeStoppers program, in which students aware of other students with drugs or weapons or who are involved in vandalism, can report that information anonymously. Financial rewards for helpful information are determined and administered by the Junior CrimeStoppers Board. There is also a CrimeStoppers hotline.

• Support teams of teachers who have received special training to assist students with behavior problems.

• An early intervention facilitator who is a licensed psychologist, focused on assisting troubled youth, such as those having trouble with social interaction.

• Voluntary drug testing for high school athletes. Athletes are strongly encouraged to submit to volunteer drug testing, an initiative that has yielded 90 percent participation, according to McCoy. "We have an incentive program that gives them a discount card, valid at supporting businesses in the community," he says. "The kids who participate serve as great role models for the younger kids, sending the message that they are drug-free and proud to show it through voluntary drug testing."

• The Student and Family Enrichment (SAFE) Program, which employs a social worker and two counselors to provide assistance and counseling outside of school for troubled students and their families. "Many of the issues that affect schools are home-related," says McCoy. "Parents have despaired and let us know, so we offer this service. We meet on weekends or whenever we can accommodate the families, and counsel the parents and the students, together."

The school district also has uniformed police officers, known as "student resource officers" whose services are funded through a grant. The officers serve a middle and a high school, part of the day, every day. McCoy points out, however, that the officers' job is not to patrol hallways but to serve as a positive

point of contact for students. "The officers teach classes and are a curriculum resource for teachers, but of course, should a problem arise, they are already on-site," he adds.

Closed-circuit television systems monitor all school entrances, and new schools are designed so that entry is not possible without passing through the front office. Students are trained to report visitors without badges.

A school safety manual and crisis response plan is used consistently throughout the district. "Obviously we cannot anticipate every situation, but we have done a pretty good job," says McCoy.

Various security and safety measures in the Warren County Public Schools are mandated by the Board of Education, and some are initiated voluntarily. "Policies are modified for the grade levels they serve," says McCoy. "A district discipline policy is the governing article for all the schools, and the key proponent is zero tolerance for violence and racism. We apply common sense, and set forth that for every negative action, there will be a reaction."

Suburban district mirrors larger community

Columbia, Mo., a large suburb of some 100,000 people, including its college populations, is the largest city in central Missouri, according to Chris Mallory, assistant superintendent for secondary education for the Columbia Public School District. The district serves 16,000 students in grades K-12 and offers a large adult education program. Its 28 schools include elementary, middle, junior high, high school and vocational.

According to Mallory, safety and security issues and measures were of primary importance to the school system long before coverage of such issues became heightened in the media. "The fact of the matter," he says, "is that the safest place for kids to be is at school - safer than church, home or the mall."

Mallory says that though the Columbia Public Schools have fortunately not experienced any standout issues or risks, schools are a microcosm of what goes on in a community. "If you have drug or alcohol issues in your community, then you will have them in your schools," he says. "We are in a university town and have some 26,000 college students, which may create more of a potential market for drug traffic."

The district's proactive approach to safety and security includes a range of measures that emphasize positive interaction among community members. Mediation programs addressing social concerns and conflict resolution are offered to students at all grade levels. A drug prevention program called DARE is active in the elementary schools, and there is a unit of CrimeStoppers.

The district's high schools employ full-time police officers and also benefit from a community policing system whereby schools are an important part of the officers' beats, says Mallory. "The police are not there to patrol, however," he emphasizes. "They are a positive presence in our schools. They address questions and needs, and interact in educational settings with teachers and students."

Additionally, closed-circuit television cameras help Columbia's secondary schools monitor areas that are otherwise difficult to supervise.

All Columbia Public Schools follow emergency and crisis management plans that are double-checked all the time, according to Mallory. (A real one — not a drill — went into effect during this interview, as Mallory hastened to respond to a tornado alarm and initiate emergency procedures to keep the students safe.)

"We are generally a close-knit community, though some of our schools tend to be larger," he says. "One of our high schools has more than 2,000 students, but in such cases, we work logistically to bring the communities closer together. We get to know our kids in a big way, so we know and can support who is supposed to be where, when. That is the best kind of preventative medicine."

Urban district banks on vigilance

Henry Fraind, superintendent of schools for the Miami-Dade Public School system, Fla., also cites vigilance as the best policy. He notes that the contrast between strong and weakened families and communities is one of the most important factors impacting America's students and their education. The Miami-Dade school system invests substantial funds in its safety and security measures - upwards of $35 million annually, according to Fraind. "Our programs enable us to be aware of exactly what is going on, and exactly what is being brought to campus," he says.

The school system serves many cities and municipalities within Dade County. It is the fourth largest urban school system in America, serving 361,000 students in grades pre-K through post-12.

Fraind says that big-city concerns such as firearms, drugs, theft, vandalism and gangs exist in the community, but are not as prevalent in the schools. "The school board has a unilateral policy that mandates safety and security standards for all county schools. We have never had a major gang problem on campus because we take a zero-tolerance, no-nonsense approach to it," he says. "When students leave campus and meet up with other boys and girls after school, yes, it is an issue, but during the day, on our campuses,

"We get to know our kids in a big way, so we know and can support who is supposed to be where, when. That is the best kind of preventative medicine."

gangs have never ruled. They are not permitted to walk hand-in-hand, taking over hallways. As for drugs, theft or vandalism, we have arrests from time to time, but they are not major problems."

Henry Fraind

Fraind recalls that for several years prior to 1993, the county began to be concerned about handguns on campus. "Based on the recommendations of our school board and staff, we implemented a handheld metal detector program, that has significantly reduced that risk."

The metal detector program exists at the middle and high school levels. Random searches are performed by an outside security company, ensuring every middle and high school is searched at least once a year, if not more. Fraind says the element of surprise has been the success of the program.

> "The key is that the majority of our programs encourage students to try to talk out their problems instead of picking up a gun or fighting."

Miami-Dade Public Schools also has its own police force, comprised of state-certified police officers with full arrest powers. One officer is assigned to each middle and high school. Fraind says that other police officers routinely come on campus to teach and assist with preventative safety programs, including Youth Crime Watch and anti-drug programs.

Intrusion alarm systems defend against theft in the schools, and closed-circuit television cameras have been implemented in many existing schools and in all new schools. "We have been able to identify several people and resolve incidents as a result of the CCTV," says Fraind. "We have to document all incidents that occur, whether it is a fight or alleged sexual misconduct."

Fraind says it takes time, effort and devotion on the part of parents, teachers, staff, administrators and anyone willing to volunteer their time, to ensure the safety of a school.

Some of Miami-Dade's safety and well-being programs at the secondary level include:

- Crisis intervention teams;
- Eyes in the Hallway;
- Security monitors who manage hallway traffic, parking lots and the school yards;
- A student judiciary committee;
- Intergroup Relations Specialists, whose job it is to counsel teachers as well as students in workshops that promote vocal problem-solving; and
- A conflict resolution program.

At the elementary level, the school system employs security monitors, but no police. "While we do have some problems on the elementary campuses, they generally do not compare to those on the middle or high school campuses," says Fraind. The safety and well-being programs in the elementary schools mirror those found at the secondary level, but on a smaller scale.

"The key is that the majority of our programs encourage students to try to talk out their problems instead of picking up a gun or fighting," he says.

Fraind explains that the school board for the Miami-Dade system has determined clear consequences for certain offenses. "For instance, if a student brings a handgun on campus, he is automatically suspended, recommended for expulsion and likely to be removed from school, with no hope of ever returning." Such offenders are sent to alternative schools. "If a student continues to pose a risk at an alternative school, he may be transferred to Juvenile Justice, a behind-bars, educational program," he says.

Students are expected to live up to a Code of Student Conduct, approved by the school board.

"More and more of our young people are saying, 'let's rid our campuses of the bad element,' yet some schools in America remain in dire straits. When people realize that it is not just teachers who can resolve all the issues, but that it must be a community effort, we will be on the road to recovery," says Fraind.

Across socioeconomic divides, unity breeds stability

William French, an educator with a distinguished career spanning 50 years in America's schools, has served rural, suburban and urban communities as teacher, principal, and superintendent of schools.

He observes that in the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, when racial segregation and the Vietnam War weighed heavily on the minds of America's students, it was those who protested peacefully in school who were heard and hearkened to.

In the past decade, America's students have absorbed the shock of jarring images of school communities torn apart by violence at the hands of students, but French says that such instances are still the exception - not the rule. "When all the components responsible for a school community - the Board of Education, administrators, teachers and parents - are working together actively, the community and its students are best served," he says.

He points out that at all levels, division breeds instability, and unity breeds stability.

Kate Henry is an Atlanta-based writer and regular contributor to ACCESS CONTROL & SECURITY SYSTEMS INTEGRATION.

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Protection for portables

As school administrators assess their security needs, they need to pay special attention to portable classrooms.

By Mike Kennedy

The spate of school shootings across the nation has heightened the sensitivity of administrators to providing secure campuses for students and employees.

But all the steps school districts take to make their buildings safe environments for learning may be wasted if the security plan does not take into account the portable classrooms on campus.

Portable buildings, often isolated and distant from the main building and situated in difficult-to-monitor areas of the school grounds, give rise to security issues that the main school building does not have to confront.

"They are a unique security problem," says Mike Gough, director of security for Montgomery County, Md., Schools. "Portables need to be as secure as the rest of the school."

Going mobile

In an ideal district, all school buildings would have ample numbers of classrooms to accommodate every student who turns up at the door.

But while educators dream about finding that ideal district, administrators running school systems in the real world know events are less predictable.

Photo courtesy of New Castle Modular Specialties

This portable classroom in Carmel, Ind., is one of thousands in use on campuses across the country. Schools need to consider portables when they put together their security plans.

Student enrollment may spurt unexpectedly and force a school to quickly find additional space. Building an addition or a new school would solve the problem, but that costs money that many districts do not have, especially on short notice.

Thousands of schools have solved their space crunch, at least temporarily, with portable classrooms.

Educators have debated the merits of portables for years. Proponents point to their flexibility in addressing short-term space needs and to costs that typically are lower than permanent construction. Detractors have complained that portables can be unsightly and cheaply made, and the indoor air quality in some may not meet environmental standards.

Regardless of how a district comes to terms with such issues, one fact is undisputed: The presence of portable classrooms on a school campus raises safety issues that cannot be ignored.

"Portable buildings, often isolated and distant from the main building and situated in difficult-to-monitor areas of the school grounds, give rise to security issues that the main school building doesn't have to confront."

All by myself

Since most school sites are not designed to accommodate portable classrooms, the units are often placed wherever a district can find space.

"One of the things you commonly see with portable classrooms is their remote location on campus," says June Arnette, associate director of the National School Safety Center in Westlake Village, Calif. "Teachers often feel secluded and not secure."

In some cases, portables have to be a certain distance from the main building to comply with fire codes. If a portable is to be used for a fourth-grade class, the school will often place the unit close to the section of the main building where the other fourth-grade classes are, even if that might not be ideal for enhancing security.

In other cases, because many districts view the portables as less than ideal, their placement may have more to do with public relations than security.

"Districts typically like to put them in the back because they are often eyesores, or at least not very attractive," says Gough.

The out-of-sight locale of many portables gives cover to people doing things they shouldn't be doing: students spraying graffiti, hiding drugs or weapons or climbing onto the roof; homeless people looking for unobtrusive places to gather; vandals and intruders who see the portable units as easy marks.

One solution is to place portables in more visible areas. That way, people in the portable, as well as people in the main building, can more easily spot suspicious activity.

"It's better to have natural surveillance, clear views," says Arnette. "If there are windows in the portable, don't block them by using them as bulletin boards."

Schools need to make sure that clear view is intact after hours, too.

"You want to light up the area at night to keep people from congregating out there," says Gough.

"To discourage break-ins, portables should have steel doors and a keyed lockset," says Linc Moss, president of the Modular Building Institute. "Schools should protect windows on portables with grates or other equipment that discourages unauthorized entry.

"Someone from the school — a security officer, an assistant principal or a teacher — should routinely patrol the grounds around a portable classroom several times a day," says Moss.

"You want to make teachers and students feel that they are not isolated out on an island in the middle of the playground."

In addition, schools should try to place fencing or other barriers to prevent climbers from getting onto the roofs of portables. Likewise, districts should make sure structures have some kind of skirting around the bottom of the portables to block access to the areas underneath the units.

Links to the outside

When trouble happens, teachers in portables must be able to get in touch with

Safety strategies

The National School Safety Center in Westlake Village, Calif., offers districts these tips for working with law-enforcement agencies on security:

- Ask local law enforcement to conduct a risk-management or safety assessment of your schools.
- Create an agreement that spells out how your school and law enforcement will cooperate when a crisis occurs.
- Start an Officer Friendly program or other opportunities for law enforcement to make presentations to students.
- Arrange for students and staff to ride along with law-enforcement officers on patrol.
- Work with law enforcement to fingerprint young children and provide them to parents or guardians.
- Pair law-enforcement officers with high-risk youth, similar to a Big Brother program.

These tips are included in the Safety Centers handout, *Working Together to Create Safe Schools*, which is available on its web site, www.nssc1.org/home.htm.

someone in the main building. For instance, many schools will call for a lockdown of all classrooms when signs of trouble arise.

"You need some kind of two-way communication," says Arnette. "You want to make students and teachers in portables feel that they are part of the whole school community."

Many schools have phone connections in their portables, while others use walkie-talkies, computer linkups or even closed-circuit television (CCTV).

Merely connecting a portable with the school's intercom system may not be enough protection. Gough recalls an incident in which a teacher was working in her portable after hours when some students began to harass her. Her intercom calls to the main office went unanswered: The office staff had gone for the day.

"You can't rely on the intercom if there is nobody in the office," says Gough.

"In such a situation, it also helps if a portable classroom has a secondary exit," says Moss. "That way, students and teachers can flee from trouble even if the main entrance is blocked."

Back and forth

Schools often rely on portables when parts of the main building are undergoing renovation or expansion, so portables are often found in and around construction areas.

Districts need to ensure that the portables have adequate fencing, lighting and other protection so students and staff are not exposed to potential construction-site accidents.

Even without construction, getting from the portable to the main building can raise safety concerns. Snow, rain and ice can make the walk from the portable to the main building a risky trip. Installing walkways and canopies can make the journey less hazardous.

Photo courtesy of New Castle Modular Specialties

To enhance security, schools should place portables, like this one in Brooksville, Fla., in highly visible locations.

"The presence of portable classrooms on a school campus raises safety issues that cannot be ignored."

Students assigned to portables are a part of the overall school and usually will need access to the main building, whether to attend a class, visit the office or go to the restroom. Those needs could conflict with a school's security plan that calls for locking exterior doors to keep intruders out.

"Schools should look at locks that are appropriate to the age of the student," says Gough. "Older kids can handle a three-digit combination. Younger kids could use a key, and the door should be equipped with a handle that is easy to operate for children."

As a general rule, schools should be providing portable classrooms with the same level of security as the main school building. The units may be temporary, but they will be on campus long enough for the chance of something bad to happen.

"In the past, the view was that portables were temporary and wouldn't require all the permanent security measures," says Gough. "But if you're talking two or three years, that's a long time. It really becomes part of the overall building structure."

Mike Kennedy is staff writer for AMERICAN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY *magazine.*

Securing a balance

Having a security plan that protects students and staff while respecting their rights will help minimize the potential for legal trouble.

By Mike Kennedy

As troublesome incidents of violence continue to send shudders through the nation's schools, questions about security nag at administrators: Are we doing enough to protect our students and staff members? Have we considered all the possibilities for how someone could breach our defenses? Have we established programs designed to prevent violence or defuse situations before they reach the breaking point? Have we cracked down too much and made the school setting so stifling that it inhibits education?

Besides worrying about the devastating consequences that could result from a violent episode, administrators must also concern themselves with the possible legal repercussions of their security decisions.

If you don't take enough precautions and lax security leads to trouble, you invite criticism — and potential lawsuits — from those who feel you weren't diligent in ensuring your facilities' safety. But if you push too hard the other way and impose too many restrictions, it could result in complaints and lawsuits from students and parents who contend that your safety program is infringing on their rights.

Photo courtesy of the Center for Prevention of School Violence in Raleigh, NC

At a workshop in Burlington, N.C., school officials conduct a physical inspection of a school building to seek out potential security problems.

No one has devised a foolproof way to avoid lawsuits — a look at any court docket in the nation makes that evident. And since the facts of specific cases differ and legal rulings vary from state to state and jurisdiction to jurisdiction, what one judge finds acceptable in one case, another judge might find objectionable in another.

But those who work with schools and security say the best way to minimize the threat of litigation is to devise a comprehensive security plan that takes into account the unique needs and problems of the community.

"The focus is not on avoiding lawsuits, but on keeping kids safe," says Bill White, administrator of the safe schools and violence prevention office of the California Department of Education.

Heightened focus

Until recently, many schools were not addressing their security needs head on, often approaching school safety only through prevention and intervention programs. In addition, schools often are guilty of hampering their security efforts by

attaching greater importance to image and politics than to safety.

Certainly the carnage in April 1999 at Columbine High School in Jefferson County, Colo., jolted awake any administrators who were not paying attention to safety needs.

"The day after Columbine, I'm sure a lot of administrators pulled their crisis-response plans off the shelf," says Doug Robinson, programs manager for the Center for Prevention of School Violence in Raleigh, N.C.

"Schools moved quickly — too quickly, some argue — to close perceived gaps in their security plans. The emotionally charged circumstances have led in some cases to an atmosphere of panic," says Raymond Vasvari, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio.

"There was a haunting fear among a lot of school administrators that there was a need to do something — anything," says Vasvari. "Unfortunately, it has resulted in a lot of quickly conceived, ill-considered policies."

Photo courtesy of the Center for Prevention of School Violence in Raleigh, NC

Doug Robinson, programs manager for the Center for Prevention of School Violence in Raleigh, N.C.,explains the "safe schools pyramid" to educators.

Going too far

Student advocate groups such as the ACLU have objected to school policies that, in the name of safety, infringe on students' rights of free speech and freedom from unwarranted searches.

"A troubling trend is the growing tendency to adopt zero-tolerance policies — one-size-fits-all justice," says Vasvari. "It results in disproportionate responses to relatively trivial problems."

Students have been suspended for possessing Tylenol, displaying tattoos, dyeing their hair an avant garde color, or wearing a religious symbol.

"Some schools are looking at student speech with a histrionic eye," says Vasvari. "Students who make inappropriate or ham-handed attempts at humor are being treated as if they're members of the Manson family."

Vasvari contends administrators should have the flexibility and discretion to take into account mitigating factors such as a student's personal background and prior disciplinary record.

The ACLU of Ohio has compiled a report for school administrators, *Safe and Just Schools for Ohio's Children* (www.acluohio.org/edu/safe.pdf). While it does not totally discourage the use of security officers and equipment, the report urges schools to take a deliberate and broad-based approach.

Security devices and personnel are responses, but not solutions, the report states. They do little more than pre-suppose violence and cannot substitute for violence prevention programs in the classroom.

For schools to become safer, the ACLU advocates greater emphasis on school counselors, extra-curricular activities, career placement, cultural diversity and student government.

Given a voice, students will identify with their schools, take pride in them, and work to solve, rather than create, problems, the report says.

A comprehensive plan

At the Center for Prevention of School Violence, Robinson says the best course for schools who want to improve their security is to attack the problem comprehensively by looking at both physical security needs and prevention.

"You have to be proactive, not just reacting," says Robinson.

The Center explains its comprehensive approach through what it calls a safe schools pyramid of intervention and prevention. Its elements include physical design and technology, conflict management and peer mediation, student-initiated anti-violence groups and school resource officers.

"It's not just one strategy," says Robinson. "We look at conflict-resolution skills, character education. Schools should have a crisis-management plan in place. They should

> "By having effective programs in place, school officials can identify and defuse trouble before it erupts into violence."

"If you don't take enough precautions and lax security leads to trouble, you invite criticism – and potential lawsuits – from those who feel you weren't diligent in ensuring your facilities' safety."

conduct a physical assessment of their facility. Is it conducive to a safe, orderly environment? Look at trends —where are fights happening, where is the vandalism, where does the bullying occur? Get the community involved. Get some expertise at the table."

Planning ahead and focusing on prevention also is the emphasis in California, says White of the state department of education's safe schools and violence prevention office. His department provides training regularly to schools to help them update their safe-schools plan.

"You need to make sure the plan is not just an administrative exercise," he says.

By having effective programs in place, school officials can identify and defuse trouble before it erupts into violence.

"It's not just stopping the fight," says White. "It's anticipating the behavior and situations that lead to the fight. The problems tend to poke out much earlier."

Despite the steps schools have taken to bolster safety, most school officials concede that no program or equipment can eliminate the possibility that violence and tragedy will descend on their campuses — or the fear and anxiety that grip every school when word spreads of another school-related attack.

But by trying to address the broad elements that make up a school's climate and culture, administrators can be confident they are improving the odds, as well as minimizing the potential that the school will be hit with a security-related lawsuit.

"There are no guarantees," says Robinson. "Some things still go wrong. But we have to give 110 percent to confront the challenges we need to address."

Mike Kennedy is staff writer for AMERICAN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY *magazine.*

Metal detector use in schools

Daily use of metal detectors was reported in 1% of public schools. Schools where serious violent crimes were reported were more likely to use metal detectors than those with less serious crime or no crime (4% compared with 1%). Random metal-detector checks were more likely to be reported by large schools (15%) compared with small schools (less than 1%) or medium-sized schools (4%).

Source: U.S. Department of Education

$100 million for safe schools

California has allocated $100 million for schools to create a safe learning environment for students.

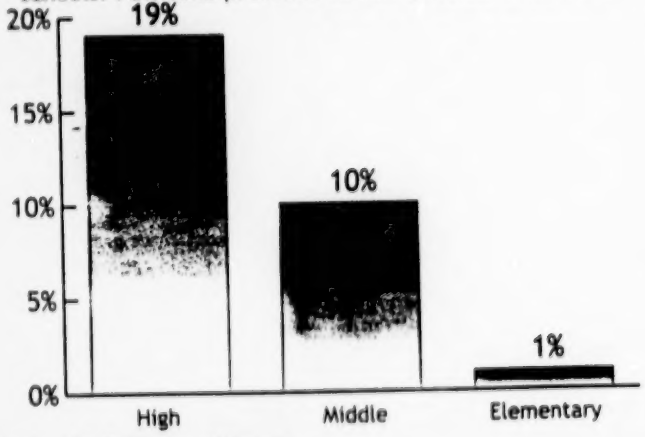
Gov. Gray Davis signed a bill in June 1999 that makes School Safety and Violence Prevention Block Grants available to schools with any grades 8 through 12.

The grants are providing funds to hire personnel in conflict resolution, provide on-campus communication devices, establish cooperative arrangements with law enforcement, and support programs whose goal is reducing violence in schools.

The size of the grants — based on enrollment — is a minimum or $5,000 per school site, or $10,000 per district, whichever is greater.

Law enforcement in schools

Six percent of public schools had police or other law-enforcement representatives stationed 30 hours or more at schools. Full-time presence of law officials at schools:



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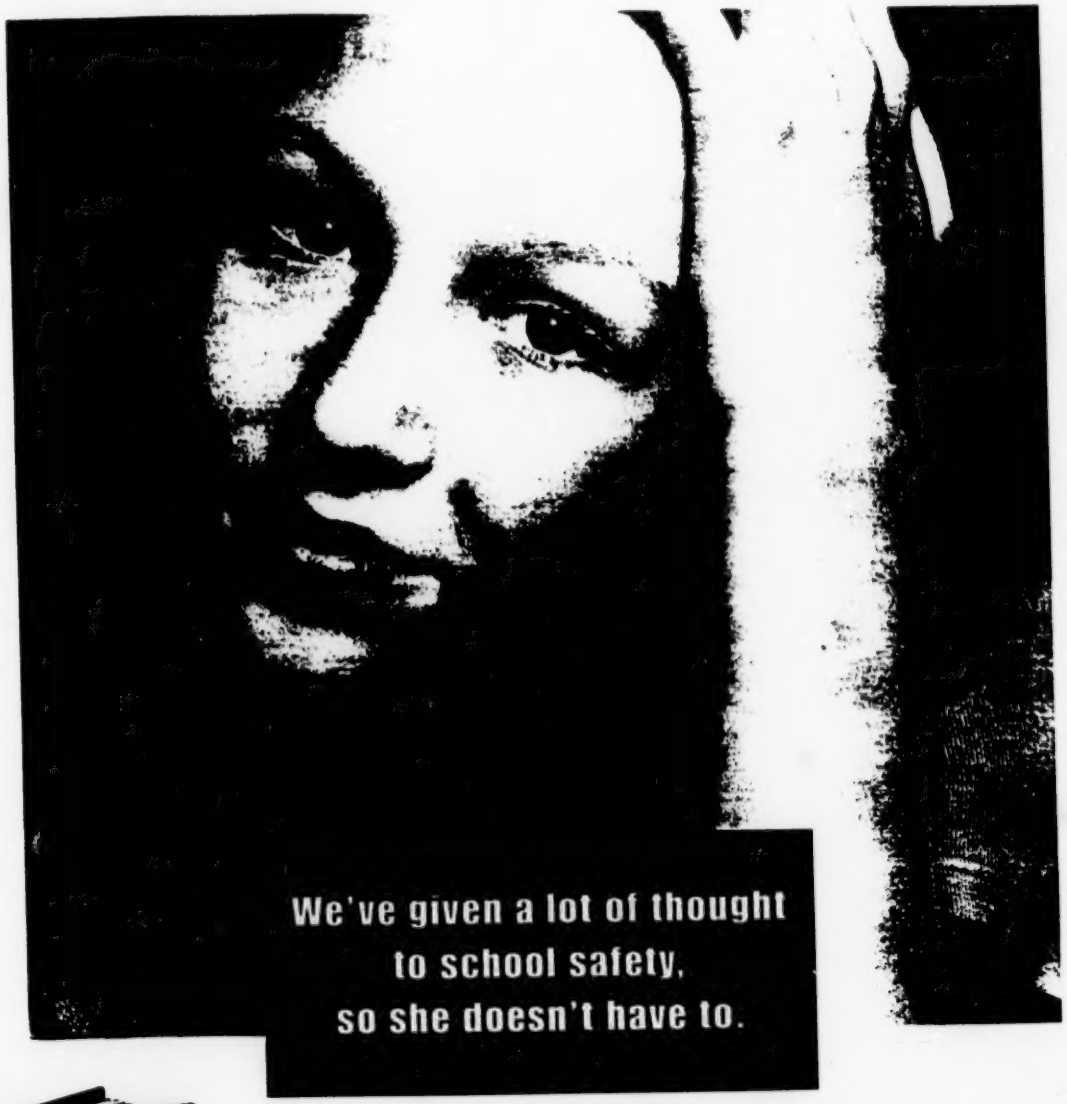

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